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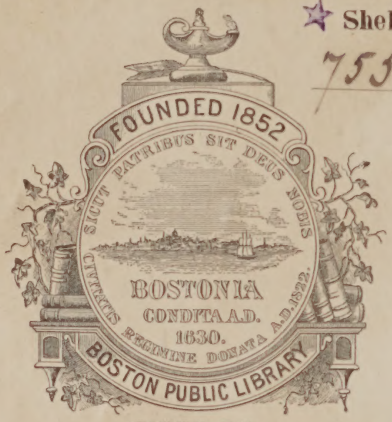

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THE RADICAL CREED:

A

DISCOURSE

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF REV. DAVID A. WASSON,

AS MINISTER

OF THE

Twenty-eighth Congregational Society of Boston,

MAY 7, 1865.

DELIVERED BY THE PASTOR ELECT.

With an Appendix,

CONTAINING THE INSTALLATION SERVICES.

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THE RADICAL CREED.

In coming to assume the place once held and honored by Theodore Parker, with the function of minister to that which is known as the most radical religious society in America, I shall respond to the rightful expectations of others no less than to my own feeling, by stating, as broadly and explicitly as time permits, the convictions that will command and animate my action. The present topic, accordingly, will be The Radical Creed. Not that we yield at all to the popular demand for a creed which shall be a test of fellowship and co-operation. Goethe said well, that "the best is not to be interpreted in words; the spirit in which we act, that is the greatest matter." They are in sufficient communion whose commanding purposes are the same. Principle is interpreted by action and the will, far more truly than it ever can be by the intellect. At bottom, beyond question, all good men believe the same; but in words good men will doubtless differ to the end of time, as they have done from time's beginning. To set up any verbal creed as authoritative is therefore to cause needless divi-

sion and misunderstanding; it is to push apart those who belong together; it is to hinder that flow of sympathy which fructifies the heart, and that co-operation which gives efficacy to the labor of mankind. Hence it is a great step in advance to set aside verbal conditions of fellowship, and to account those brothers in belief who are brothers in will and work. I do not propose to surrender an inch of ground which has been gained in this direction.

In speaking of the radical creed, I mean to imply that the radical movement in religion is the offspring of a moving, positive faith, — a faith not yet to be, but already in existence. The substance of this faith no man, it may be, is qualified to express even tolerably in words. But it exists, and, well or ill, can be stated. I shall attempt some exposition of its import, though well aware that I shall do it less than justice. But, at least, those who know what belief is, shall see that we are acting under its inspiration, and that our liberality consists not in believing less, but in believing more, than most others.

The underlying assumption of the radical faith is, that man is here on the earth to be schooled in the art of living worthily; to build up and establish his spiritual being by faithfulness to its indwelling and inspired law. Hence we form religious associations, that, by working together and aiding each other, we may discriminate the vital, perpetual truth of the soul, and apply it in believing duty alike to private and public life. Vital truth, — that truth in which the spirit of man lives and grows, — this is our quest. To discern this is the blessing of

the eye; to make it sovereign in action is the fruition of the heart, the upbuilding of the spirit, and the consummation of good in the world.

This determines our attitude as strictly affirmative, — no less so than that of nature in growing an oak, or, at least, than that of a gardener in fostering fruit. We seek to build, build, always to build at the spiritual architecture of humanity; beginning with our own souls, and ending in service to mankind. So far as we depart from this affirmative spirit and upbuilding labor, let us be amenable to censure, and stand in the abashed confessions of silence before it.

But here, at the outset, we encounter a common misapprehension, by reason of which the more we are believing and affirmative in our attitude, the more we are accused of being the contrary. There are many who assume, that one is a builder only as he finds in tradition his foundation, his material, and his plan of edifice. Hence, if one is more intent on vital than on historical truth, he seems to such altogether infidel. If he find foundation, material, and design in the soul itself, — in God's plan and means of architecture there, — and seek to build accordingly, they regard him as essentially destructive.

We *do* look primarily to vital truth and law. We assume that God is a builder for ever; that the soul is his architecture; that his design is expressed and his material furnished therein; and that our business is simply to comprehend his plan, and to work upon that material and by those powers which his creative inspiration supplies.

We say, then, that man, as a growing soul, has his root in eternity, his resource in God; and that his business is to draw up and use this resource according to a plan expressed in his spiritual being. Others say, that he has no such root and resource, and that, by consequence, he is spiritually constituted only as he submits himself in passive acquiescence to beliefs entertained and mechanisms established in past time. Each of these assertions denies the other; but how much candor is there in representing the former as mere denial? What honest man can withhold the confession, that it simply substitutes a larger and more spiritual belief for one less spiritual and more limited?

Some say, however, "Your ability to do so high a duty, and think so good a thought, is due largely to church shelter and incubation in past time; therefore it is ungrateful, at best, to refuse abiding within the limits of its form and dogma." I admit the fact, but decline the inference. The life of the chick within the egg owes a like debt to the sheltering walls which enclose it. Should it therefore remain always within them? What were that but to defeat the very purposes they were designed to serve? Is the mother wronged, or is she rewarded, when her son, in the fulness of time, takes to himself a wife, forsakes the roof beneath which he was born, and goes forth to act in the world from his own judgment and heart? Were he more dutiful, and she more gratified, did he in his bearded manhood still cling to her apron-strings, and say, "Please, mother, may I"? All thanks to mother church! but thanks expressed by abnegation of spiritual manhood, and

by playing baby in bearded age, are questionable at best.

It is surely true, that, had not Jesus lived, we should not be here in the present quality of our life and action. Does that limit our liberty of thinking and believing? Take a parallel case, and see. But for Lavoisier, the science of chemistry would not be in its present state of advance: he is the father of that science as it now exists. Did that forbid Sir Humphrey Davy to discover the metal sodium by means of the galvanic battery? Does it forbid the humblest chemist in the world to make any discovery he can, to assert the right of his own intelligence, and to use in freedom all his resources, alike those for which he is, and those for which he is not, indebted to Lavoisier? It takes but very little common sense to clear up such a matter.

I aver that one is not a jot nor tittle the more a Christian for loading Jesus with high-sounding titles, nor even for commemorating his services. Newton discovered truth of the physical world. Jesus illustrated truth of man's spiritual being. One, however, becomes a Newtonian, not by instituting rites in his honor, and affecting always to repeat his name, but by recognizing the composition of light and the order of the solar system; and, in the same way, one does not become a Christian by lauding the person of Jesus, but by faithfully conforming to that fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man, whose law he obeyed. It is not the truth as it is in Newton, but as it is in the universe, which Newton would elucidate: it is not the truth as it is in Jesus, but as it is in God and the soul, of which Jesus is the

prophet. He, therefore, who makes use of all his eyes to see and of all his force to operate soul-truth here and now, he it is — not one who will see truth only through exegetical pin-holes, and operate truth only by traditional mechanisms — who comes in the true line of succession from the grand sanctities of history.

Thus we hold that all the past comes to fruit through a free faithfulness of thought and deed in the present. Recognizing fully that there are cripples who need crutches, and tottering babes who must hold by a hand or a chair, we recognize also that the more one can stand and walk alone, the more credit he does to the ancestry which begot and the cares which reared him. We would not shame Jesus in his skies by making him see, that from the travail of his soul has proceeded only a helpless posterity, who must always be carried in arms, and always lie at nurse on the breast of tradition. Let him behold rather a fruit of his soul with which he can indeed be satisfied; let him see that he is historical ancestor to a strong and ruddy race, able to think in truth, to believe in freedom, and to work in power. Radical belief attempts these higher prosperities of faith. It will try to show that the civilization of Christendom is not an institution for coddling babies, and keeping them babies, but a field of growth, work, and free belief for men. It may fail; but he does small credit either to his heart or his understanding who desires its failure.

Having thus expounded the spirit of our effort, I will now try to state the beliefs that support it. What are those vital truths which, partly as the result of by-gone

sanctities, we are able to-day to affirm as that truth without which the soul were not itself, nor man, man?

First, then, we affirm God. This will, indeed, be widely taken as a mere matter of course. Everybody believes in a God. But *a* God, some kind of God, existent somewhere and manifested sometimes, is not at all that which we declare. We affirm Eternal Spirit as sole Substance, sole Force, the sole Life; apart from whom the universe were not even a corpse. We affirm not only that he is good, but that Goodness is the very fact of his being; that Good and God are one and the same. We affirm not only that he exists here and now, always and everywhere, but that he contains all space and all time in the bosom of his ubiquity and eternity, just as the intellect contains its thought, and the heart its feeling. We affirm that he is not merely revealed now and then, here and there, but that existence, that the universe itself, is all and only revelation, — nay, that it is all a miraculous revelation; beyond any scope of words, beyond even the confessions of adoring silence, miraculous.

Using metaphysical strictness of speech, I call God supernatural. This word *supernatural* has been so abused, that I would not employ it, could it be dispensed with. It has been confounded with *preternatural*, *contranatural*, and what not? I use two correlative terms: God, the supernatural; nature, the form of his visibility on the level of the senses. As God can appear to the bodily eye, he is seen in the visible universe; as he can appear to the eye of the understanding, he is seen in the order of the universe; as he can appear to the eye

of æsthetic sensibility, he is seen in the beauty and terror of the world, in its whole impression upon refined feeling: and so to every deeper eye in man he is visible in another degree; till, at length, the inspired heart sees him only in the form of its own adoring fealty, as celestial Love and Law, — the All in all, — the living Whole without parts, — the burning Unity whose flame is earth and heaven, sun and star, — the sole Reality, which man best names when he nobly loves, and who names himself only by unfolding the universe, and making life in man.

The supernatural is God; the supernatural is the Real, is the only Reality: Nature, I repeat, is the form under which this Reality condescends to be seen by the physical eye. Goethe said this, and said it well: "Nature is the garment of God which thou seest him by." Nature is not God, any more than the letter-press of a book is itself the thought of him who wrote the book. The printed word is simply the medium between that thought and the eye of the reader, the form under which it can to that eye appear. The whole universe is exactly such a printed volume; which, if one dote upon merely as words, merely as print, he learns nothing; while if he read it with the eye of the soul, he begins to learn all.

It is impossible for any to take this more seriously and deliberately than it is meant here. The notion that God once made the world in six days, or in six or sixty æons, and then, retiring, left it to go, is a baby literalism; is prattle for nurseries, not truth for grown men. It is in virtue of these infantile conceptions that theologians

go looking for God, as Diogenes looked for a man, candle of tradition in hand, though the inspired soul is making noon in earth and heaven, — go seeking instances wherein the Eternal has forsaken his supposed hiding-place, has broken through the walls of this made world, has suffered here and there a witness to see him, and thereafter to bear witness that he is still extant, or at least was in their day. Mr. Mansel has lately confided to us, that but for these extraordinary peeps we might lawfully deny his existence. Childhood is venerable; but second childhood is pitiable. Sweet is the babble of babes; but, when age can only babble, it maunders, and reminds us only how sweet is the grave.

We say, on the contrary, with Goethe, that the true secret is the open secret; that God, instead of hiding, does nothing but appear; that the world issues from him in this instant, as thought from reason; that natural existence is but the form of his visibility on this lowest level, — that of the senses.

To say, therefore, that he appears *in* nature is not enough: his appearance to bodily sense *is* nature, and all of nature. Thus all which the eye of the body sees is nature; while all nature is miracle. And, as it is only and utterly miracle, is simply the medium of God's visibility, nothing can be *more* a miracle, though a higher order of marvel accomplishes itself in the soul. Hence the attempt to manifest God more by oversetting the order of nature, and disturbing his manifestation thereby, is like attempting to render a writer's thought more manifest by printing the words upside down, so that they could not be read. But God prints his own

book, and does it wholly for the purpose of meeting, rather than of defeating, the intelligence of man. The order of nature is the grammar of nature; it is that relationship between the words which makes them a vehicle for the thought.

I have never meddled with the miracle controversy; for I try to keep on the highways of universal truth, and will never, if it can be avoided, run into any blind alley, merely to waste time, and then come out again. Let me here, however, say a word on this matter, since the subject demands it. I do not set up my knowledge of natural possibility as exhaustive, and am ready to believe any event, even to the raising of a man from the dead, of which the evidence seems sufficient. I do not know of any such case as yet: but I will not pronounce it, point blank, impossible; and, if any man thinks that he does know of such, I have no objection. I should believe it upon evidence that was to me convincing: he *must* believe on evidence that to him is convincing. Between him and me, therefore, there cannot be, so far, any ground of quarrel.

But if any one define miracle as the contranatural, and declares further that the contranatural alone reveals God, then the whole case becomes graver. Such a one, to my mind, plunges into bottomless abysses of sheer unmeaningness. I can neither dispute nor agree with him; for nothing intelligible is said. Is it intelligible to say that the thought of a writer can be uttered in print only as he appears, and knocks the type into *pi?* Nature is God's book: what *can* one mean who avers that only his voluntary introduction of confusions into it, only his

violation of grammatical order, so that it cannot be understood, makes it an expression of his thought!

However, one may see what brings about such statements. They arise from two fundamental misconceptions: first, the notion that nature has existence apart from God; second, that it is an opaque screen or wall between God and man, sundering and hiding them from each other, — both notions, the spawn of a materialistic mock philosophy. Were this indeed so, then truly it were only as holes were broken through this screen, that God could appear. Then Mansel would be right: were such holes not to be discovered now, we should have to inquire whether such had been seen in any time, and God's hand coming through. Such evidence of this as could be found would then be our evidence that God exists; while such truth as seemed to be passed out through the aperture would be that which we could confide in as God's truth.

I believe in the supernatural and in revelation to the same extent, through the same evidence and by the same act of mind, that I believe in God and nature. Nay, it will appear under the following heads, that I believe in revelation far *more* than in nature; that is, in one of a higher order, accomplished in the spirit of man. But in the aperture theory of divine appearing, I profess no belief. This theory is made necessary, if one is to believe in God at all, by a materialistic philosophy; it is simply unmeaning, a mere inanity of words, in the presence of a spiritual philosophy. Say that Spirit is Substance, is Reality; say that nature is the manifestation of this Reality to sense; and, at once, all those

pitiful Paleyisms and Manselisms, all those notions of God's being evidenced only through holes broken in natural order, are ready to disappear on dust-pans, borne out by the kitchen servants.

"The garment of God which thou seest him by." Yes, I believe in my soul that this visible universe exists only as it expresses God; that it is all and only expression; that, could you pass a hand between the sun and *its* sun, there would not be left of it even a shadow. So much we affirm God.

2. I think we shall agree — saving, perhaps, the phrase — in affirming that the doctrine of the God-man is the true and only sufficing doctrine of the human soul. Small solace is there in a distant deism, which represents God as sitting afar in the heavens, coldly spying upon his creature, and coldly assigning him reward for success, and punishment for failure. No tidings is that to breed a great gladness in the heart. The true evangel is this of Christhood. The cheering news is, that man is not alone in the desert of nature; that God not only is with him, but *lives* with him and in him, and by that vital intimacy constitutes him man. In man's nature, God stoops to the conditions of mortality, — to the discipline of time. Wherever the soul has birth is a Bethlehem; and wherever it nobly suffers, a Calvary: in both there is more than the budding and passion of an individual nature; in both the divine has part, by an implication no less vital and real than if it were by mingling blood, and answering thrill of nerve. The doctrine of Immanuel, in this deep sense, is no mere theologic fancy nor pious sentimentalism: it is metaphysical truth. Yes, all which

the eye of religious imagination has discerned in the life of Jesus, all that the faith of Christendom has affirmed concerning the intimacy of eternal Life with his being, we may hold to be that last suggestion, for which speech is scarcely competent, concerning the spiritual being of man. Jesus, all real as I doubt not he is in his historic personality, is, by his place in theology, the epos of Christendom; shadowing forth for men that sweetest, awfulest truth of the soul, which they knew not to utter but by this symbol, nor dared bring nearer to the crudities of their natural experience.

In the visible universe God was manifested; but to whom? to what? To himself? That were superfluous. To nature? Nature is not to itself visible: the sun shines, but sees not by his own light. Creation waits for something more: it is yet unfinished. God looks to something more: he is not yet revealed. Now, then, comes that creative act which surpasses natural creation. From beneath, nature climbs to a consummate form, — the form, but only the *form*, of man; from above, the heavens open, eternal Life, descending, meets this form, breathes his own life into it; and lo! man, the immortal Adam, finite and infinite, natural and supernatural, stands forth to crown earth and content heaven. In the universe, nature is formed; in man, it is transformed. In nature, God is uttered; in man, he is enshrined. "You touch heaven," said Novalis, "when you lay your hand on a human body."

Only the God-man is man. Only when natural existence by its last ascent, and Absolute Life by its infinite condescension, have come into vivid, burning unison, is

the deathless lamp of man's spirit lighted on the altar of the universe. Using the language of Christian tradition, we should say, that man, as a form of nature, is the first Adam; man, as a supernatural life, is the second Adam.

Only the God-man is man. The story of Jesus is a history of the soul. The chemistry of his potent life has won from the heart that profoundest secret which it could not have confessed to itself. All natural existence, all the hard conditions of time, are the manger to which heaven, age after age, condescends; accepting weakness and need, taking on the straitness of mortal life as swaddling-clothes.

Observe that we do not exaggerate the value of any actual life. The meaning of man's existence, designed for immortality, creeps out feebly, even in the best; clothing their mortality only as the lichen clothes the stone. He who is indeed sometimes a God in nature is sometimes also but a weed by the wall; and many, alas! there are, who would misbecome even the name of weed, — toad-stools of humanity, by whom nature itself is slandered. It is in no spirit of complacency that we vindicate the scope of man's spiritual being: humbled, rather, and appalled, we bow before this majestic secret of the soul; confessing, as with trembling lips and lowered lids, that awful glory of man's being, which, of his actual life, is the exceeding shame. But, though in shame, we will still confess it, and bless God for the humiliation it brings. Glad the tidings are still, though so glad as to be heard only in penitence and hidden tears. Glad they are: let their gladness go forth to breed an awful joy and a blessed contrition. Let the

earth hear it,—that, when the form of man was prepared, God took from his own heart a drop of its sweetest blood, and to man's heart gave it as an all-including gift; and thenceforth felt the throb of the human heart in his own. Tell it to the drunkard you have rescued from the gutter; tell it to the wretch you visit in the jail; shame his actual life by reverence for his spiritual possibilities; and if one touch of that reverence can penetrate his brutality, and reach his heart, it will shatter the built-up crime of his life as with lightnings from heaven.

To declare Jesus the Son of God is to utter a truism. We all know that. Even the wretch, Booth, even the greater wretch, Davis, would confess that. Thieves and women-whippers, state-prisons and slave-marts, will affirm it with tripping tongue. Why is the confession so powerless? Because it is apprehended as foreign truth, while home truth alone commands our lives. Porson was learned: does that teach us Greek? Homer was blind: does that make us write Iliads? Truth of another is but matter of curiosity, if it be not truth of humanity. God was with a Galilean soul: the mystery of eternity came then into time; a majestic, enrapturing secret inhabited that life. Well, and what else? Is that all? Is it of but one life that we speak? I am hungry: will it satisfy hunger, or only render it more poignant, to tell me of delicious, abundant repasts, which another enjoyed? Were that kindness, or cruelty?

"The Christhood of humanity," the mystery of eternity in the soul of man, — this is the sure word of

promise for the race; for it tells us, that man's failure were God's defeat. This truth gives to all baseness its one transcendent rebuke; it gives to good hope its one ineffable assurance; it gives to faithful labor its one infinite consecration. Let him, therefore, who would proclaim a real evangel, proclaim this. Let him open his eyes to see, and loose his tongue to declare, this *vital* implication of God in humanity. Let him announce the life of heaven in living souls; and his voice will chime in with the chant of those angels who sang of old, and still sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men."

3. We affirm truth in the hope of immortality. This follows from the foregoing. Because the blood of God beats in the heart of man, man is deathless. There is but one eternal life. But where that life is, there is its privilege, not to know death. Manhood is Christhood: Christhood is immortality.

4. Revelation, in the higher sense of the word, is another consequence of the same. The vital self-revealing of God in man produces verbal revelation of necessity; for whatsoever is vital in humanity climbs incessantly towards speech. All that is said in the secrecies of the soul will and must be proclaimed on the housetops of humanity. The life of eternity in man; the voice of eternity by man.

I cling, as to sanity itself, to the persuasion that revelation takes place. It does so, if truth of the soul be truth of heaven. It does so, if the instinctive conviction of man's spirit be a needle pointing to eternal poles.

In thinking that justice is good and injustice bad, are

you sure that God thinks with you? Is there no possibility that to him injustice is the good, and justice the bad? Are you not only sure, but have you a *native* assurance and certainty of that? Then, if heart-truth and heavenly truth are the same, there is revelation. If the moral sense is a needle answering to the magnetisms of eternal law, then, above the revelation made in nature, there is another and higher, a *super*natural revelation, made in humanity.

In my theory, you will see that all, at least, holds together. First, the life-blood of God in the being of man; next, the ineffable chemistries, by which this resolves itself into thought and speech. First, the vital revelation; then the verbal. First, eternal life in man's being; then, eternal truth in his conscience.

No man, heterodox or orthodox, believes in the golden rule merely because Jesus put it in words, but because his heart says of the words, "They are good." Would you murder, were it not forbidden in the ten commandments? Go, jail-bird of nature, and hide! Would you grind the faces of the poor but for words in the Hebrew prophets which forbid it? Away, heart of stone, till the millstones of mortal discipline grind your flint into softness! The Bible of the Hebrews would be this day dead to us as a dry stick, did it not meet another Bible written in the heart, and writing itself *out* of the heart for ever.

True it is, that this revelation by the voice of humanity comes to a commanding utterance, not in all, but in a few. It can arrive at this eminence only when a sovereign spirituality is conjoined with an unusual gift of

speech. In one respect, moreover, ancient and oriental spirituality had advantages for expression over modern European and American; namely, in the capital respect of simplicity. Our primal affirmations are spread over an immense surface of knowledge, are diffused through the innumerable aspects and interests of modern civilization; and the simple force of belief is obscured by the vast manifold body of thought and knowledge which it animates. Hebrew belief, on the contrary, knew nothing of this broad, various intellectual intermediation; but leapt, as it were, directly from the blood. I think Sir Isaac Newton was as believing a man as David; but he wrote a "Principia" instead of psalms. I doubt not there have been, and are, thousands of men as believing as David, who are never known to us at all in the same way, because their believing is intellectual rather than sanguineous.

Nevertheless, spiritual belief springs from the heart of man like grass from the earth. Vital revelation is perpetual; and in all ages, and almost all lands, there are some into whose thought and speech it transports a refrain from the melodies of eternity. Not the venerable prophets and singers of Israel alone were able to interpret somewhat in words the eternal significance of spiritual being, but the India, Iran, and Greece of antiquity mingle no unworthy voices in the grand harmony of faith; while also modern Europe and America, yea, even in our disturbed and critical age, contribute words that do not shame their fellowship. The Hebrew Bible, in my youth, was for me buried beneath Church and Catechism and Sunday school, — buried deeper than

mine-shaft ever ran. The first bread that really fed my famished hunger — oh, the hunger of how many moaning, emaciated, most miserable years! — was broken for me by a living European, to whom the name of Christian is scarcely conceded; and the first cup of pure wine, which made the blood leap and rejoice and sing through all the thrilling channels of my soul, I found in the Phædon of Plato. The confession of my gratitude proved nearly fatal to my theological connection at that time; but my obligation to it never was and never will be denied or extenuated. And now, when the venerable Scriptures which Christendom cherishes are for me no longer buried, and yield a sacred and joyful significance, I hesitate not to say, that words have been spoken in our own land, which ally themselves with my inward life as intimately and fruitfully as any spoken by Isaiah or by Paul; and I may chance to divide a consecrated hour between the Psalms of David, and strains of native song, lyrics in verse or prose. Indeed, at this time of my life, no book can interest me in a profound way, unless there is in it this undertone of eternity, this biblical refrain, and biblical, too, not parrot-wise; not by copy, but by native right. And I may add, that no man interests me profoundly, unless I discover in him this stress of a divine constraining, this gush from the primal fountains of being.

5. We affirm the spiritual community of mankind. My life is distinct, but it is not separate, from yours. Nor are men merely tagged together by fate and natural necessity; by one's liability to take infection from another; by your need of some one to make your coat, and the

like. The bond of unity is a root of faithfulness; soul is fertilized by soul; inspiration goes with a true communion; God is implicated in the relationship between man and man; and he separates himself from heaven, who separates himself in love, in interest, and spiritual fellowship, from his kind.

I say, with emphasis, that God is concerned, by the very inspirations he bestows, in the unities and communions of men. It was the old doctrine, that Christ dwells in the church,— by Christ meaning God. There was in this a great falsity and a great truth. On the one hand, it was the Catholic notion, that the life of heaven commits itself first to institutions, to social mechanisms, that is, to this especial mechanism, the Catholic Church; and is, as it were, filtered through this in order to reach human souls. This notion of an inspired institution, which, by its mechanical working, should grind out divine truth and law, lingers even in the Protestant world, and is the source of that zeal for ecclesiastical continuity which perturbs some large and otherwise liberated minds. To this, in general and in particular, I can afford little heed. Any institution is but a machine; and I do not believe in inspired machines. The noblest institution is a temporary and conventional medium, by means of which souls attain to community, — conventional, a social con-venience, an aid to men's coming together: tolerable, or even precious, while it serves; intolerable when it does not. And, to my mind, that old ecclesiastic convenience has become wholly inconvenient. I am more intent upon breaking than on preserving connection with it. Mending and

emending of that are, in my judgment, vain. It is a worn-out instrument, and not only worn out, but obsolete as wooden ploughs. I desire, now, only to rescue from it the ideas and uses it once served, but which it now disguises and hinders; and then to have done with it for ever.

But along with this notion of an inspired machine ran a great truth, which made that notion credible. The truth is, that the inspirations of God go with the high spiritual communions and fellowships of men. "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of you." Still more, where thousands, millions, rest in noble, heartfelt unity, does that inspiring Presence give consecration and divine fruitfulness. We have seen intimations of this in our recent history. Do you not feel that the spirit of the nation has invigorated, or else rebuked, every individual composing the nation during these late years? In this Church of our believing nationality, the divine Christ has dwelt; the logic of events has been the logic of God, leading us toward faithful liberty and contrite justice as a conclusion. And the higher, the deeper, the warmer, the more heartfelt and believing is any unity of men, the more in it does God implicate his life, and accompany it with his informing spirit.

6. In that monstrous doctrine of vicarious atonement, I acknowledge an element of high truth. The burden of the world *does* lie heaviest on the noblest hearts. No man acts, no man suffers, for himself alone; least of all, he that is greatest; and the representative soul is ever in some sort a proxy for his age. He who most

stands for the divine in humanity is most tasked to lift at its dead weight, and to stretch a little wider its limitations. If he be excused, to a noble degree, from these limitations in his own person, he feels them all the more in the persons of others. The winged spirit of Jesus bore the Pharisees as another body, and, through their sordidness and selfishness, struggled with that brute weight of the earth which he felt so little in himself. The most believing thinker of great power, which our land owns, has best expounded scepticism; and thereby has told us, after his own serene fashion, how, more than any unbeliever, he has taken up all the leaden doubt of the age, not to lie down beneath, but to master and resolve it. In every period of spiritual transition, it is some few large, deep, and lofty spirits who chiefly take up and digest the woe of the time, crying, at length, "It is finished," on behalf of the century they have delivered. "He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and by his stripes we are healed," is the perpetual chant of gratitude by which those whose pathway another's sacred anguish of thought and toil has made clear confess their obligation. Have we not in our own days seen the iniquity of the nation laid, in blood, upon brows that were white and pure from the stain of that sin? Have we not seen the mother who bore her first-born son, not in a mother's travail alone, but in pain of prayer for justice to all, — have we not seen her bearing the penalty of that injustice which was never hers, by her tears above his early grave? Was it the worst man in the nation who fell, of late, in Washington by the

assassin's hand? Winthrop and Shaw and Putnam, was it their own guilt that they expiated?

"Thine iniquity shall find thee out:" that is true; it is the truth which the old Hebrew saw so clearly, and felt so keenly. But there is another truth, subtler, deeper, of which Christendom is custodian, though hitherto it has not put this treasure into the great economies of history, but, like the precisian of old, has laid it away in a Messianic napkin. It is, I will not say that another's iniquity will find thee out, for this would be giving it too hard and narrow a form; it is, more broadly, that the divine in each soul assumes the limitations, not merely of an individual nature, but of man's nature, of mortality. Those only feel these limitations in others, who have mastered their own, — those only who have risen grandly above egoism and custom-worship, lifting their heads into the heavens of love and truth. The smug egoist rests in his selfishness as in a cave underground. No Atlas he to breathe hard in holding up the sky-shelter and peace over mankind. Only one who has gone out of himself feels the weight of others, and all the burden of time. But he may not escape, may not wish to escape. The burden of humanity is his; let him bear it well; and only by death, at last, leave his memory, indestructible like granite, to bear still a weight that it no longer feels. All that a great spirit has, it owes to man; and rudely enough, by many a cold-blooded Caiaphas and many a roaring rabble, the debt may be demanded.

Be it so, then. It is well. He that is privileged to be among the best has his sufficient privilege in that,

and can well afford to bear at second hand the limitations of worldliness, of narrowness, of egoism, in which so many others are contained, as within the walls of a jail, — a jail, perhaps, that they have not enough of inward emancipation even to recognize as such.

7. Liberty to think and believe, liberty not only legal, but cordial, we affirm as necessary, no less than liberty to breathe; for what is thought but the respiration, and what is faith but the heart-beat, of the soul? He who wars upon this, whether by legal penalties or by ghostly threats, is so far an enemy of mankind; nay, he fetters revelation, and fights against inspiring life. Eternal life lives again, self-begotten, and vitally revealed, in the soul of man. Therefore to liberate the soul, to liberate heart and intelligence, alike from bonds within and bonds without, is one among the most sacred duties which any man owes, not to himself alone, but to humanity and to heaven. He is not, indeed, thus liberated, who binds his spirit to his pride of independence, and refuses to follow, though he feels, the attraction of an intelligence loftier and more liberal than his own. But a man in earnest will incur small peril of this. To my observation, the exaggerations of individualism are, save in a few cases of morbid conceit, very harmless, and yield quickly to any wooing from a more lifted thought; provided, always, that this sacred drawing and invitation from above be one that is really felt, not merely rumored.

Liberty! and yet, as part and parcel of our faith in this, I trust that we believe also very cordially in persecution. Only we propose to persecute in others pre-

cisely that which we habitually persecute, and always mean to persecute, in ourselves; namely, bonds, — all which prohibits believing and adoring intelligence from equalling its privilege, and accomplishing its destiny. Let us dog this, in ourselves and others, with the fire of sincerity and the sword of truth; hacking at it, and heaping the fagots about it with right good-will, and no relenting. All which that fire can burn, it shall burn. Meanwhile, he who will persecute us in the same way will further all the deepest economies of our existence, will deliver us from just that which we hate; and all the thanks of our hearts shall be his. Any thing in me which the fires of the soul have power to consume, in God's name let them consume, — all my wood, hay, stubble, dross, all the hempen bonds or blinding masks of tradition, of egoism, of insincerity, of irreligion. Come, every man that loves me, with a torch in his hand, and burn, burn, so only that he be God's inquisitor, and his torch of divine flame. Persecution is very good, is part of that which we are here for, if only you use heavenly fire, and if you persecute bonds rather than brain and belief. It belongs, indeed, to the great service of a true fellowship that it develops these heats, which at once consume and create; and he who has found a spirit with which he can enter into these burning reciprocations will not go from life without having really lived.

8. We affirm retribution as a universal law, designed, in part, to vindicate the principle of justice; but, in a divine system, designed, yet more, to produce amendment. Punishment, hopelessly prolonged for its own mere sake, and excluding rather than inviting reform,

were revenge of the worst sort; and, could God harbor a thought of it for one moment, it would in that moment breed a hell in his own bosom. Hence we limit legal penalty to the end of use. So far as necessary to uphold the moral order of society, so far it is justifiable, no farther. Why not apply this principle to the greatest criminal in the land, Jefferson Davis? Put him to manual labor as his fittest punishment. It is in an attempt to degrade labor in the person of the African race that he has reddened his hands with three hundred thousand assassinations: let labor pay its debt by bringing to him the wholesome humiliations he needs.

9. I think we may name it as part of the radical creed, that government is divinely instituted; in other words, is the child and servant of the moral sense, which is divine. The moral sense demands, makes, and should inspire it. Only as the offspring and officer of this is it not a usurpation. False to the moral sense, it is a usurpation; and it matters little whose usurpation, whether that of one or of millions. Its function is to give every man his right: true to that, it is legitimate; untrue to that, it is but mechanized lawlessness. To give every man his right; and the right of each is to live his life, not merely as a body, but as a soul; not merely as an animal, but as a man; to crown it with beauty, and endow it with truth; to nourish it with love, and liberate it in service, all he can. It is not enough to say that rights are equal, they are absolute: every man's right is absolute to do and be the best he can, — to be the most of a man his nature will let him become. It is that right which makes government: government is the coalescence of

many such, in order that the right of each may be supported, not merely by his private strength, but by the public arm.

I shall preach this the more earnestly because our country needs a powerful leaven of such doctrine. For the moment one says, not that the right of each human being is absolute, but that the right of a majority is absolute, he is adrift. I resist the usurpation of masses as I do that of kings. The right of the majority is mediatorial, instrumental; and the moment it puts its foot upon the neck of a single human being to hold him down; the moment, even, that it wilfully withholds help from a single human being, who, by its help, could rise, —that moment its right is so far forfeit, and the doom of heaven begins to gather against it. The moral sense is the true sovereign; its, and its only, are the sceptre and crown; and even usurpations in form, like that of Maximilian in Mexico, are tolerated by destiny, if, and so long as, they supersede a government less consonant in fact, whatever in pretence, with the moral genius of mankind. To interpret and apply the sovereignty of moral law is the use and justification of all government: any form of government is best in a given place, which, considering the moral condition of the people, will, in the long run, best effect for them this mediation; and ours will stand so long, and only so long, as liberal, intelligent conscience, as an eye to see and a heart to answer the demands of man's moral genius, shall constitute a majority at the ballot-box. A form of government lives while it is also a form and efficacy of moral truth. Ceasing to be this, it lapses; and all the hosted strength

of unrighteous kings, all the trooping consents of infidel suffrage, and all the volumed eloquence of political doctrinaires or hireling advocates that shall ever be known under heaven, cannot save it.

10. Finally, let us end as we began, by affirming growth of spirit, the free upbuilding of man's inward life, as the use of nature and history. For this, is the visible universe; for this, are the disciplines of time. The toil and rest, the pleasure and pain of life, look up to this as their end; the earth, by its treasure and terror, by prairie and desert, by land and sea, seeks but this consummate use; gravitation and electricity are forms of supplication for this; the sun paints the promise of it in the hues of dawn, and night whispers down the same prophecy from her solitudes and the heights of her ever-silent, ever-speaking stars; while all the struggle of history, and all the mechanisms of civilization, serve their final purpose only in serving the spirit of man. Serving this, all these mingle somewhat in the glory of man's immortality; and therefore creation groaneth and travaileth together, till, at last, in the soul their uses are once and for ever enshrined, once and for ever lifted to the right hand of the Father.

Be it ours, therefore, to assume with certitude this point of view. Be it ours always to see, that, for the architecture of man's spirit, the world and we are here.

Hence our labor in this place. Let us faithfully trace out the relation to this end of all man's special powers, of all his experience in society, of all his action and impression in nature. Let us, so far as may be, take up the past, whether Hebrew or Greek, whether of

Orient or Occident, and read in all this perpetual theme, — God's education of a human soul. Let us follow infancy up to manhood, and manhood up to its consummate grace, still seeking to know the possibilities and the means of growth. Let us behold the strong soul in his first great epoch, learning to lend all his will to the spiritual idea of his being; laying a sovereign hand on passions and powers, labors and pleasures, self and society, and constraining all to that service which is their duty and their exaltation. And then let us follow him to his other epoch, when he learns to have only that he may give, to be that he may do, to lose himself without loss, — lost and saved for ever in loving and believing labor for man. For he that serves man worships God; service is salvation; that soul is saved, which, in wholeness and preserving wholeness, has surrendered itself to the uses of humanity.

APPENDIX.

INSTALLATION SERVICES.

On Sunday, May 7, 1865, Rev. David A. Wasson was installed as minister of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society of Boston. The exercises on the occasion were as follows: —

After an introductory hymn by the Choir, the following letters were read to the congregation by Wendell Phillips, on behalf of the Standing Committee: —

Letter of the Committee to Mr. Wasson.

Boston, March 13, 1865.

Rev. D. A. Wasson.

Dear Sir, — As Standing Committee of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society of Boston, it becomes our welcome duty to communicate to you the wishes of the society that you should be permanently connected with them in the sacred and beautiful relations of preacher and pastor.

It is with feelings of peculiar depth and earnestness that we can make this proposition to any man. We did not so much call Mr. Parker as he called us around him; and now, for these many years, we have held firmly together by the strong tie that he wove for us. You well understand its nearness and its strength.

In asking you to stand in his place and to carry on his work, we rejoice to know that you sympathize with his views, and strive after the same ends for which he so long labored. Yet we do not wish you to follow in his footsteps, or to be trammelled by his authority. We wish you to preach the faith of your own soul as he did of his;

for we believe the earnest speech of every true heart is a part of the divinely revealed religion.

You have always been, in the minds of many of the parish, the person who might most fitly succeed Mr. Parker; but the state of your health seemed for a long time to forbid our entertaining the hope that you could take the duties of a large parish upon you. But as the passing years have rather increased than diminished your strength, while a smaller hall and less exciting times make less demand upon our minister, we hope that this hindrance will pass away.

We have arrived at this conclusion after ample and free discussion, with a full expression of individual opinion; and the result was a majority so decisive, as to leave no room for doubt that it was the earnest wish of the society that you should be their minister.

You know us so well that we need hardly tell you what we ask from you, or what we can give you in return. You know that you will be fettered by neither creed nor ritual; but we are hungry for spiritual food, and ask you to give us such manna as you can gather for us. We ask you to be our friend in joy and sorrow; our teacher in all the duties of moral, religious, and social beings; to give voice to our aspirations in prayer, and to join us in the psalm of thanksgiving and praise. In return we offer you that ready and generous sympathy, that hearty co-operation in all good works, which will lighten your labors, and give you the confidence that they are bearing good fruit.

May we not hope, that, in a congenial sphere of labor, with an attached and united parish, the invigorating sense of increased usefulness will renew your health and strength, and enable you to minister to us for many years? We earnestly pray that it may be so; that you will cordially respond to our wishes; and that we may no longer be as sheep without a shepherd, but feel that we are a true church, a household of faith, united in love and confidence, and looking to you as a new bond to bind us more closely together.

With sentiments of the highest esteem and regard,
We remain, your friends,

CHARLES W. SLACK.	EDNAH D. CHENEY.
A. A. BURRAGE.	WILLIAM SPARRELL.
JOHN C. HAYNES.	MARY MAY.
J. H. STEPHENSON.	S. B. STEBBINS.
JOHN WETHERBEE, Jr.	JUDITH W. SMITH.

Mr. Wasson's Reply.

Worcester, April 9, 1865.

To Charles W. Slack, A. A. Burrage, and others,
Standing Committee of the Twenty-eighth Congregational Society of Boston.

Dear Friends, — After much consideration, I have concluded that my place is with you; and I accordingly decide to accept that invitation to become your minister, which you have expressed in terms of so much kindness. Recent events have caused me to feel with new force, what I felt strongly before, that your society *must* continue to exist, and to be a power in Boston. As a tribute to its own past, the existence of it was not strictly necessary. The memories which consecrate it would live, though itself did not. But when, at the opening of a new epoch in America, and while the soul of the nation is all one strong cry of prayer for spiritual sustenance, support, and enlightenment, the majority in a National Convention of Unitarians dares not say that it believes in any thing beyond traditional catchwords, — at such a time, every mature seed, every established focus of spiritual belief, becomes precious beyond price; and he is criminal who has the power without the will to contribute toward its preservation and its use.

I dedicate myself, therefore, to the services you ask of me. We will not repeat the past; we will not do over again what is already nobly done. We will begin the work which is now given us to do: according to the best genius vouchsafed us, we will build steadily at the spiritual architecture of humanity, and on the basis of God's self-revelation in the soul of man. Without cutting loose from antique faith and sanctity, we will decline to be their mimic; without disguising the centrality of Jesus, we will neither worship the cobwebs which mediæval spiders have spun over the majesty of his life, nor turn the back upon God when he speaks otherwise than in the Hebrew tongue; without alienation from the spirit of our own time or of any time, we will still by voice and deed maintain, that man has his chief root in the instant eternity, and only as he is fed out of that can be really man. We will discuss the events of the day in the light of God's day, the shine of his eternal truth; and in modesty and boldness will seek to know, to believe, to live, to fill up the measure of our spiritual privilege. I join hands with you for this work, giving and receiving help, and depending with you upon the Helper of all.

You know under what physical difficulties I undertake this labor. I will not ask you to consider me, to bear with me, to excuse me from all but that necessary and vital work for which my little strength, at best, will be but half adequate. I count with assurance upon your magnanimity; and, by requests such as these, should belie that faith in you, which is one main staff upon which I lean.

You know, also, that the wit, the preternatural memory, the exhaustless copiousness, the fertility of illustration, the aptitude for occasion, the social activity, and the thousand and one popular gifts of Theodore Parker are not mine; you knew this before inviting me, and have therefore made apology gratuitous. Your act tells me, that it will be enough if I can give you living truths in living words. I will try.

Your friend and fellow-laborer,

D. A. WASSON.

P.S. — I will be ready to begin, if required so soon, by the first Sunday in May.

After reading the above letters, Mr. Phillips asked, first the congregation, and then the newly-elected minister, whether they would now publicly assent to the engagement thus made. The assent having been given by both, Mr. Phillips declared the contract ratified, and proceeded to address the society as follows: —

It remains only that in your name I should welcome our dear friend to this desk, which represents, in our view, the bravest and boldest element of New-England life. I love to trace its spirit back to the most earnest epoch of our country's existence. It seems to me that all eras are brothers, and that all great moral and religious emergencies call out the same qualities in men. This pulpit is but the reproduction of that earnestness of religious faith, that breadth of religious life, which planted New England. I think the key-note of our religious idea is found in the pathetic farewell which Robinson addressed, at Leyden, to the departing Pilgrims. He said, "I charge you, before God and his blessed angels, that you follow me no further than you have seen me follow the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord has more truth yet to break forth out of his Holy Word. I cannot sufficiently bewail the condition of the Reformed Churches,

who are come to a period in religion, and will go, at present, no further than the instruments of their reformation. Luther and Calvin were great and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God. I beseech you, remember it, — 'tis an article of your church-covenant, — that you be ready to receive whatever truth shall be made known to you from the written Word of God." It was in that spirit of entire personal independence, with face set forward and not backward, and drawing its inspiration from the future and the present, not from the past, that our country was founded. And one of the first principles which the Pilgrims affirmed was, that every soul was equally near to God; that no laying-on of human hands, no cunning ceremony, could make one man fitter than another for any religious service. There was no priesthood; there was no calling of an individual to lord it over God's heritage; but, "all ye are brothers;" and, when they looked to one brother above the rest for counsel, they themselves summoned him to their side.

Again: they had the clearest instinctive perception, that there never could be a true union of independent, thinking men in a creed. The early churches of our country had no creeds. Their unity was not that of intellectual ideas, but of religious purpose; the unity of a life which, in its earnestness, single-eyed devotion, contented submission to bearing each other's burdens, aspiration to lift nature to its loftiest point, welcomed all difference of intellectual view into the same brotherhood. I do not say that they always practised their theory, but they *believed* it; they groped their way in pure faith toward it, and they acknowledged its sufficiency. Very soon after they landed, the warm faith of many grew chill; and, in the next generation, still more were afraid to claim their birthright. The chill of unbelief, the corruption of subsequent generations, built up round each religious organization a wall behind which indolent and timid souls sought to shelter themselves from the hard task of thinking out their own creed. This desk was an effort to go back to the old root of New-England faith; and Theodore Parker, when he occupied it, represented the advance guard of New-England thought and purpose. I differed from him on almost every point of religious doctrine; I found myself drawn close into the most intimate brotherhood with him in every act of religious life. Wherever a work was to be done, wherever a great quality was to be unfolded, wherever a true Christian life was to be built up or manifested, I found

no other Church so near to my own ideal as this, which one holding the most antagonistic doctrines had erected close at my side. I think the same magnetic and Christian attraction has summoned many a one into our circle, whose brain retained its own shape. But he was not merely an intellect. The passer-by on the other side thought him only an iconoclast, — a destroyer, — a breaker of images. He was a destroyer, as Fulton was a destroyer when he replaced the slow barge by the steamboat; he was a destroyer, as Luther was a destroyer when he replaced the darkness and coldness and narrowness of the Middle Ages with the light and the warmth and the breadth of modern Christianity; he was a destroyer, as Michael Angelo was a destroyer when his chisel hewed off the unsightly corners and clumsiness of the block of marble, and revealed the Christ which lay below: but in no other sense was he a destroyer. In every other sense he was a builder, and the scenes of the last four years show how wisely and how deeply he built. No nation was ever summoned to so severe a trial: but when every thing seemed gone to wreck; when there was no precedent on the file; when the ruts were all rubbed out, — the Nation, with the tenacity of a Christian purpose, linked itself to the justice of the throne of God, and survived the storm. Amid the awful crisis of that danger and confusion, it lifted itself up to the exhibition of a Christian humanity able to soften the horrors and alleviate the inevitable sufferings of war, such as no epoch has ever exhibited hitherto. I do not say that this pulpit was the single agent, but I say that it stood chiefest among the agencies, which made this proud, sublime, merciful, just, Christian nationality possible. It is the best proof how wisely this class of seeming image-breakers have been really building the Church of the living God.

Look also at the last four years in the status of woman, — bringing the purity, the humanity, the tenderness of her nature into every channel of public life, — and say, if the agencies, this chiefest among them, which have broken down the wall of partition, and summoned woman to a broader sphere, have not been building as well as breaking down. And how religiously this one has builded! There was no vexed soul, struggling alone with spiritual problems on the other side of the globe, that did not hear his name who stood here, and feel the strength of a brother's sympathy. There was no class, low down in the moral and spiritual nature, which did not feel they had his strong hand underneath them. His friends were not merely the

great intellects, but they were the broad, warm hearts, the world over. His was not the piety that trusted for health to the gymnastics of the closet. It grew robust in the active labors of the street.

We welcome you to his desk, my brother, — not to be trammelled by his example: but we felt, very naturally, that his mantle fell on your shoulders; that you were eminently fit to continue the work which he set us to do. We will hold up your hands. Teach us to be good men and women, Christian men and women; faithful in public and private, as husbands and wives, as parents and children, as private men and as citizens. Embolden us to speak the truth everywhere, telling the world what we know. Lift us to our noblest duties; bind us to our gravest sacrifices. Make us practical and efficient in all the service which the world needs. And when God summons you or us to another sphere, or to other labors, may we feel that while we were together in this brotherhood, our best natures were cultivated, our strongest services were rendered; that we were lifted into a Christian life pre-eminently, and in our degree were co-workers with God in all that he formed us to do!

The order of services following this Address, and conducted by Mr. Wasson, was as follows: —

HYMN.

Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me,
Still all my song shall be,
"Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!"

Though, like the wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!

There let the way appear,
Steps unto heaven;
All that thou sendest me,
In mercy given;
Angels to beckon me
Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!

Then with my waking thoughts,
Bright with thy praise,
Out of my stony griefs,
Bethel I'll raise;
So by my woes to be
Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!

Or if on joyful wing,
Cleaving the sky,
Sun, moon, and stars forgot,
Upward I fly,
Still all my song shall be,
"Nearer, my God, to thee, —
Nearer to thee!"

PRAYER.

HYMN.

THE INSTALLATION SERMON.

DOXOLOGY.

BENEDICTION.